HMICFRS

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
and Fire & Rescue Services

PEEL

Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy 2018/19

An inspection of Cheshire Constabulary

Contents

What this report contains

This report is structured in four parts:

1. Our overall assessment of the force's 2018/19 performance.
2. Our judgments and summaries of how effectively, efficiently and legitimately the force keeps people safe and reduces crime.
3. Our judgments and any areas for improvement and causes of concern for each component of our inspection.
4. Our detailed findings for each component.

Our inspection approach

In 2018/19, we adopted an integrated PEEL assessment (IPA) approach to our existing PEEL (police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) inspections. IPA combines into a single inspection the effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy areas of PEEL. These areas had previously been inspected separately each year.

As well as our inspection findings, our assessment is informed by our analysis of:

- force data and management statements;
- risks to the public;
- progress since previous inspections;
- findings from our non-PEEL inspections;
- how forces tackle serious and organised crime locally and regionally; and
- our regular monitoring work.

We inspected all forces in four areas:

- protecting vulnerable people;
- firearms capability;
- planning for the future; and
- ethical and lawful workforce behaviour.

We consider the risk to the public in these areas important enough to inspect all forces every year.

We extended the risk-based approach that we used in our 2017 effectiveness inspection to the efficiency and legitimacy parts of our IPA inspections. This means that in 2018/19 we didn't inspect all forces against all areas. The table below shows the areas we inspected Cheshire Constabulary against.

IPA area	Inspected in 2018/19?
Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour	No
Investigating crime	Yes
Protecting vulnerable people	Yes
Tackling serious and organised crime	No
Firearms capability	Yes
Meeting current demands	No
Planning for the future	Yes
Treating the public fairly	No
Ethical and lawful workforce behaviour	Yes
Treating the workforce fairly	No

Our 2017 judgments are still in place for the areas we didn't inspect in 2018/19.

Force in context

	Cheshire rate	England and Wales rate
999 calls per 1,000 population 12 months ending 31 March 2019	123	175

	Cheshire rate	Most Similar Forces rate
Recorded crime per 1,000 population 12 months ending 30 September 2018	89	71

Cheshire workforce

	FTE in post on 31 March 2019	FTE in post on 31 March 2014	Percentage change
Police Officer	2,006	1,925	4%
Police Community Support Officer	189	190	-1%
Police Staff	1,307	1,134	15%

	Cheshire spend	England and Wales spend
Spend per head of population 2018/19 projection	£174	£192

Overall summary

		Last inspected
⚙ **Effectiveness**	●●●○ **Good**	
Preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour	●●●○ Good	2016
Investigating crime	●●●○ Good	2018/19
Protecting vulnerable people	●●●○ Good	2018/19
Tackling serious and organised crime	●●●○ Good	2017
Armed response capability	Ungraded	2018/19
£ **Efficiency**	●●●○ **Good**	Last inspected
Meeting current demands and using resources	●●●○ Good	2017
Planning for the future	●●●○ Good	2018/19

	Legitimacy	⬤⬤⬤◯ **Good**	Last inspected
Fair treatment of the public		⬤⬤⬤◯ Good	2017
Ethical and lawful workforce behaviour		⬤⬤⬤◯ Good	2018/19
Fair treatment of the workforce		⬤⬤⬤◯ Good	2017

How does the force compare with similar forces?

We compare Cheshire Constabulary's performance with the forces in its most similar group (MSG). MSGs are groups of similar police forces, based on analysis of demographic, social and economic factors. For more information about MSGs, see our website.

Cheshire Constabulary's MSG forces are Northamptonshire Police, Derbyshire Constabulary, Staffordshire Police, Wiltshire Police, Devon and Cornwall Police, Avon and Somerset Constabulary and Suffolk Constabulary. We haven't yet inspected Derbyshire Constabulary, Staffordshire Police, Devon and Cornwall Police and Avon and Somerset Constabulary as part of IPA 2018/19, so use their graded judgments from our previous PEEL assessment for comparison.

Figure 1: Pillar judgments for Cheshire Constabulary, compared with forces in its MSG

Outstanding	⚙	0
	£	0
	⚖	0
Good	⚙	6 including Cheshire
	£	7 including Cheshire
	⚖	7 including Cheshire
Requires improvement	⚙	2
	£	0
	⚖	1
Inadequate	⚙	0
	£	1
	⚖	0

HM Inspector's observations

I am pleased with the performance of Cheshire Constabulary in keeping people safe and reducing crime.

The constabulary is good at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour. It is good at investigating crime and has continued to improve through clearer procedures and better supervision. The constabulary identifies vulnerable victims well and works with partners to support them.

I am impressed by the significant improvements the constabulary has made to its crime recording processes since our last inspection.

The constabulary understands its demand well. It is using this information to develop financial and workforce plans for the future. These include increasing the number of its officers.

The constabulary continues to uphold an ethical culture and promote standards of professional behaviour well. However, I am concerned that it doesn't consistently comply with legislation when dealing with detainees in custody.

Overall, I commend Cheshire Constabulary for sustaining its positive performance over the past year. I am confident that it is well equipped for this to continue.

Phil Gormley

HM Inspector of Constabulary

Effectiveness

Force in context

Proportion of officers in a neighbourhood or response function

in post on 31 March 2019

Cheshire proportion	England and Wales proportion
52%	40%
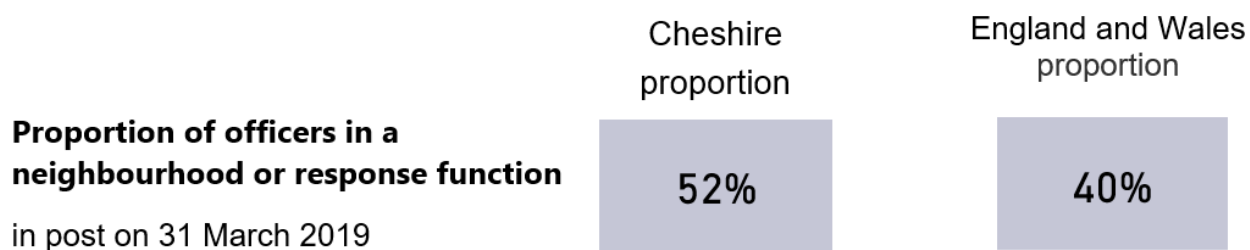
Victim-based crime per 1,000 population

12 months ending 30 September 2018

	Cheshire rate	Most Similar Forces rate
Violence against the person	30	23
Sexual offences	3	3
Theft Offences / Robbery	25	26
Criminal damage and arson	10	9

Crime Outcomes

12 months ending 30 September 2018

	Cheshire proportion	England and Wales proportion
Proportion of crimes where action was taken	15%	13%
Proportion of crimes where suspect was identified	58%	46%
Proportion of crimes where victim did not support police action	35%	23%

Outcomes for crimes flagged as domestic abuse

12 months ending 31 March 2018

	Cheshire proportion	England and Wales proportion
Charge/summonsed	18%	16%
Evidential difficulties: suspect identified; victim does not support	58%	49%

How effectively does the force reduce crime and keep people safe?

●●●○

Good

Summary

Cheshire Constabulary is good at preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour.

The constabulary is good at investigating crime, and we have seen some improvements since our last inspection. These include a new investigations board and a cyber-crime investigations team.

Cheshire Constabulary is good at protecting vulnerable people, and it has a good grasp of the scale of vulnerability in its area. Since our last inspection, it also has a better understanding of how to support people with mental health issues. This is being achieved through the implementation of a new strategy, effective leadership and training for its staff.

The constabulary is good at tackling serious and organised crime.

Preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour

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Good

This question was not subject to detailed inspection in 2018/19, and our judgment from the 2016 effectiveness inspection has been carried over. In 2016, we recommended that its problem-solving process be consistently applied at neighbourhood level.

The constabulary uses the OSARA model (objective, scanning, analysis, response, and assessment) to problem solve. While there has been relevant training given, the constabulary needs to record its use of OSARA. Some progress has been made to improve problem-solving, but there is still some work to do. We will revisit this area for improvement as part of our inspection programme.

Investigating crime

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Good

The constabulary has made improvements to how it investigates crime. Changes include a new investigations board and a cyber-crime investigations team. New procedures are also giving clearer guidance, which should lead to a more consistent approach to investigations. The constabulary is now addressing the problem of gaps in training.

Having completed our recommendations for recording crime, the constabulary now understands its crime levels better. Planning should improve as a result.

In our 2016 inspection, we recommended that the constabulary should improve its ability to retrieve evidence from electronic devices promptly. There has been some investment to tackle this, but backlogs are still delaying investigations. The constabulary is aware of this and is investigating solutions.

In our 2017 inspection, we identified that all investigations should be supervised and planned more consistently. A new procedure is now in place and there is evidence that standards have generally improved.

Areas for improvement
- The constabulary should improve its ability to retrieve digital evidence from mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices quickly enough to ensure that investigations are not delayed.
- The constabulary needs to better understand the data relating to its crime outcomes and put actions in place to make sure that it is effectively pursuing justice on behalf of victims.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of performance in this area.

Investigation quality

Cheshire Constabulary has retained a generally good standard of investigating crime since our last inspection. But it must improve its digital investigation capabilities and understanding of crime outcomes.

There have been some positive developments since our last inspection. These include a recently introduced investigations board. Led by the assistant chief constable (ACC), it oversees investigations, processes, and developments. There is also a new cyber-crime investigations team.

A new investigations standards procedure gives investigators and their supervisors clearer guidance on processes and decision making. This is positive and should provide a more consistent approach to tackling crime.

The constabulary completed our crime data integrity inspection recommendations for recording crime. Processes improved as a result. This also contributed to a rise in recorded crime of 22.4 percent between October 2017 and September 2018, compared with the previous 12 months. The constabulary now better understands its crime levels, which should lead to better planning.

Just 62 percent of the constabulary's detectives have Professionalising Investigations Programme (PIP) level two accreditation. This is low compared with other forces. But there are plans to address this shortage of trained detectives, using national guidance in line with our recommendation. There will be more investigator accreditation training courses throughout 2019.

The student detectives on the training programme we spoke to are being supported by tutors. They are now working in public protection (PPD) and criminal investigation (CID) departments as part of their development. Departments have a good understanding of resource levels, and they work well together to make both long and short term posting decisions.

Due to increased demand, the dedicated rape unit now only investigates recent rape cases. This is because they have large workloads and it is difficult to recruit into the unit. To help manage the demand, the historic rape caseload is shared among detectives in other departments. The investigations we examined were effective. The unit's investigators told us they needed more supervisory support, especially on cases that don't meet the prosecution threshold.

The constabulary is looking into introducing more detective chief inspector roles. This will offer more support to the detective inspectors, in recognition of their demanding roles.

The constabulary should now focus on matching detective skills across the workforce with expected demand. This includes large historic investigations, increasing paedophile online crime and managing registered sex offenders (RSOs). The constabulary could consider using the many accredited detectives with relevant skills who are currently in non-investigatory roles.

In our 2016 inspection, we identified that the constabulary needed to improve how it retrieves evidence from phones and other electronic devices. The constabulary has bought seven kiosks to examine mobile phones. However, training for these was provided two years ago. According to feedback from investigators, the constabulary is not making the most of the investment. More training and making better use of the kiosks will improve the service it offers.

We visited the high-tech crime unit (HTCU). This is where computers and other devices undergo detailed examinations. During our inspection, the department had resourcing and support issues. It was operating at 50 percent capacity due to vacancies and sickness, and this was creating long delays before devices were examined.

The process did not effectively triage threat, harm and risk. A total of 128 computers were awaiting examination. Some of these related to serious criminal investigations but they had been left waiting for up to a year. For example, we found an offence of indecent images not being examined within reasonable timescales.

The main complaint from investigators during our inspection was the delay to investigations caused by waiting for these digital examinations. The timescales stated for them were misleading and only began when a device was called into the unit to be examined.

We brought this to the attention of the constabulary to review the delayed work, which it did. It then put in place a plan to address this, overseen by a senior officer. It was already aware of some of the problems and had already started to address the HTCU capacity problems. The chief officers will now ask Merseyside Police to carry out a peer review to improve processes.

There is an effective relationship between the paedophile crime team and the HTCU. For example, the HTCU told us that they could get a very quick turnaround on high-risk devices when needed. The HTCU also support vulnerable victims who need to have evidence secured from phones by allowing for a one-day turnaround of devices. This means vulnerable victims are not left without means of communication, which is positive.

But the constabulary needs to solve the problems across all its digital investigations. This includes providing clear performance measures of progress, with realistic examination timescales. It needs to prioritise threat, risk, harm and contact offences for all devices.

The constabulary has trialled an initial investigations team (IIT). Its role is to carry out telephone investigations with victims of incidents when it is not necessary for an officer to attend. The trial was successful, and the team will remain in place. Thirty-three police officers will be recruited to this team. Frontline officers we spoke to told us that the IIT had reduced their workloads.

If the IIT staff identify any risk in incidents they can re-allocate them and deploy an officer. We were given an example of this happening. The constabulary needs to consider how the IIT and its occurrence management unit will identify connected crimes. This was raised by some supervisors as sometimes being missed.

Officers we spoke to understand the importance of early evidence capture during the 'golden hour' (the initial hour at the scene of an incident for collection of evidence). To improve this, the constabulary introduced body-worn video to secure evidence from scenes. It is policy that this is used at domestic abuse incidents.

Some officers still felt under pressure from the force control centre (FCC) to move onto the next incident, because of the number of calls that were unallocated but still required officer attendance. Some neighbourhood officers were frustrated at being moved to response duties while still trying to investigate problem-solving crimes.

Before our fieldwork, we completed a file review of 60 crimes selected from between January and March 2018. We found an overall positive picture, and 50 of the 60 crimes assessed were effective investigations. In 57 out of 60 cases, the crime was allocated to the correct investigator.

In our 2017 inspection, we identified that the constabulary should make sure consistent plans and supervision are in place for all investigations. This will guide and support officers, especially those managing complex investigations. In this year's

crime file review, we found that 43 out of 60 crimes had an effectively supervised or appropriately unsupervised investigation.

In response, the constabulary has made changes to make the investigation process clearer. It also has a new investigations standards procedure. A new process has been tested to improve the focus of investigations, called 'what's the plan?'. It already carries out its own process of quality control by dip sampling of investigations. Dip sampling is a technique that checks processes are being followed without looking at every single case.

We examined a selection of investigations from all departments and saw a generally improved standard since our last inspection. This was especially so with the more complex detective-led investigations, which were more thorough. The constabulary should now focus on its uniformed officers' investigations. This is where we found the few discrepancies in plans, including supervising vulnerability. But this was generally improving, which the constabulary should continue to build on.

We found that victims of crime were regularly contacted and updated. Our crime file review identified that 51 out of 60 received good victim care. The constabulary showed that specialist officers support vulnerable victims during investigations. Their training includes achieving best evidence interviews and dealing with sexual offences. Some vulnerable victims received support through evidenced-based prosecutions when they were unable to support police action, such as in domestic abuse.

Catching criminals

The constabulary has a procedure for placing 'wanted' suspects onto the police national computer (PNC). Most officers understood how to do this. They recognised that there must be both approval by a sergeant and then authorisation by an inspector, with a file prepared before circulation. Our crime file review identified five cases that were suitable for PNC circulation. All five had been correctly circulated.

Offenders not found are shown on a 'wanted persons' dashboard on the intranet. We accessed this and it was easy to use and provided clear information on:

- PNC wanted;
- recall to prison; and
- wanted on warrant.

Daily briefings focus on offenders who have not yet been caught. And serious cases are highlighted at the daily management meetings in local areas and at constabulary level. During our pre-inspection work, we saw evidence of neighbourhood officers, police community support officers (PCSOs) and housing departments working well together. This helped when finding suspects. Using local authority CCTV also helped and 'wanted' boards, showing local information about suspects who were being sought, were displayed in the police stations we visited.

For local offenders not circulated on the PNC, sergeants provide supervision and support. This information can be viewed at a local policing management level and we saw this demonstrated.

There is an effective process to make sure referrals are made to the criminal records for arrested foreign national offenders. This is to highlight overseas convictions. This process was well-managed and monitored.

There are good working relationships with the immigration service. And the constabulary showed joint working and operations, such as tackling human trafficking into Cheshire via motorway service stations. A Border Force officer is based in the constabulary's intelligence bureau one day a week. This helps facilitate information sharing.

We examined how the constabulary uses bail, following recent changes to legislation. There was evidence of data being readily available for those released under investigation (RUI). It is monitored but slightly differently in each area. This would benefit from being standardised. Inspectors and superintendents carry out 30- and 60-day reviews of RUI and receive reminders when these are due.

There is a good understanding that pre-charge bail should be used if there are certain risks involved. This protects vulnerable victims. In cases of domestic abuse, pre-charge bail was the expectation. But at times, custody sergeants appeared to make this difficult for some officers to apply for. This is something for the constabulary to be aware of, especially for its newer officers.

The constabulary had audited domestic abuse offences where RUI had been used to monitor its suitability. In the 21 cases audited in January 2019, just three were deemed to be missed opportunities for bail. There have been more audits for those charged with domestic violence with injury; out of 98 audited, 95 had bail conditions attached. This is positive monitoring.

Senior officers we spoke to recognise the risks associated with bail and they plan to improve bail processes. This includes a trial in Warrington to improve the flagging and visibility of bail dates to supervisors. The constabulary will benefit from these changes.

The disclosure process in criminal investigations ensures fairness within the system. Police investigations must follow all reasonable lines of enquiry, even if they point away from the suspect. And prosecutors must provide the defence with any material that undermines the case for the prosecution or helps the case for the accused.

In Cheshire Constabulary, there is a good understanding of disclosure. The constabulary has a disclosure improvement plan, developed in partnership with Merseyside Police. Investigators we spoke to were confident with the processes.

A disclosure training plan is well under way. The face-to-face training is one day for PIP 1 investigators and two days for PIP 2 investigators. We heard positive feedback on the content of the training and its usefulness, and there are plans for further improvements.

Following the changes to the criminal justice unit, the intention is to have a team of 12 sergeants to improve quality control. Our crime file review was positive in terms of disclosure. In 45 cases that required disclosure, we found that 42 of them had enough documented for disclosure compliance.

Investigators told us that IT problems made it difficult for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to view body-worn video footage. Yet this footage needs to be seen when making decisions on prosecutions. This is a national issue that is being progressed between the Service and CPS.

Cheshire Constabulary has an 'action taken' rate of 17.7 percent (2017/18). This is in line with the England and Wales rate. Its 'charge outcome' rate has fallen from 17.8 percent in 2016/17 to 13.0 percent in 2017/18. This remains higher than the England and Wales rate of 9.6 percent.

The outcome 16 rate (where a victim does not wish to pursue the case) is increasing faster than in England and Wales as a whole. While there has been some local evaluation, the constabulary didn't show a level of understanding of this that we would have expected to see. It would benefit from having a more sophisticated understanding of crime outcome data.

Protecting vulnerable people

Good

Cheshire Constabulary generally protects vulnerable people well and understands the scale of vulnerability in its area. Teams work well with outside agencies and there is a focus on vulnerable people.

We were pleased to see that the constabulary has responded to our 2017 feedback and that call handlers have more information to identify vulnerability. Call handling and response times to incidents are well monitored, and options to address its call abandonment rate are being assessed. The constabulary now needs to make its initial assessment of risks more consistent.

It regularly uses domestic violence protection notices and orders (DVPN/Os), and Clare's Law, to protect victims of domestic abuse.

Since our last inspection, the workforce is better at supporting people with mental health issues. This is being achieved with a new strategy, leadership and training.

In our 2017 inspection, we recommended that the constabulary review how it schedules appointments. We also recommended that vulnerable persons assessments (VPAs) needed improving. It was good to see that standards had improved this year, and that work is being done to further improve VPAs.

The constabulary manages sex offenders in the community. Most visits were up to date and there are plans to reduce delays in visits. It is aware it needs to review workloads and is addressing these issues.

Areas for improvement

- The constabulary needs to record the initial assessments of risk more consistently. This is so risk and vulnerability are visible from the outset, ensure it is used to re-assess when delays in deployment occur, and it informs the subsequent attendance and investigation.

- The constabulary needs to review its vulnerability marking processes entirely to make sure there is consistent process, and it is used to inform safeguarding considerations for victims.

- The constabulary should review the resilience of its sex offender management units to allow for effective visit and workload management. Staff must understand the process of recording and planning visits in line with guidelines, and that accurate performance data is visible.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of performance in this area.

Understanding and identifying vulnerability

Cheshire Constabulary has a good understanding of the nature and scale of vulnerability in its area. But it must improve some processes within its control room and the clarity of vulnerability in investigations.

The constabulary produces a range of analytical products such as problem profiles on crime types and threats that are then used to direct policing activity. It needs to update some of these profiles and the constabulary is aware of this.

It has established relationships with local partners, such as the local authority, domestic violence workers, and its co-location and multi-agency work in supporting vulnerable people in its referral units. It works very well with mental health services and has a serious and organised crime partnership, with a focus on vulnerability.

There is now a vulnerability board to oversee developments, led by an ACC. Recent updates include a new mental health strategy, training and an integrated anti-stalking unit to work with local authorities and the health trust. Vulnerability is also a priority in training.

The constabulary uses the College of Policing definition of vulnerability. Staff we spoke to were able to explain vulnerability and its wider meaning. But the constabulary would benefit from refreshing the awareness of the definition of vulnerability as we found very few who could reference it. Despite this, all staff clearly understood it was a priority for the constabulary. Officers we spoke to demonstrated a good awareness of the voice of a child.

We attended a daily 'pacesetter' meeting. This is where senior managers review current incidents. There was good data to show the number of incidents, and there was information available to help make effective resourcing decisions.

While not on the agenda, items of vulnerability were raised that included domestic abuse, missing from homes, and serious crimes. It was positive to see support allocated to vulnerable victims of domestic abuse following DVPO/Ns.

Most officers we spoke to showed a good awareness of looking for hidden harm. Some could show specific incidents. For example, an officer who attended a domestic abuse incident saw the poor living and health conditions for a child living in the house. They then contacted the PPD and submitted a referral.

The constabulary has a positive approach to vulnerability from county lines drug activity. It has carried out proactive operations that focused on child sexual and criminal exploitation.

The constabulary records a very low number of high-risk missing children. This inspection didn't check reports of missing people, but we did find an emphasis on the importance of missing persons. Supervisors and senior officers were confident about gradings. But the constabulary would benefit from examining its grading data as part of its missing person review.

In 2018, the constabulary introduced a new command and control system within its FCC. This has caused the constabulary several problems, both from an IT and resourcing aspect. The system is now bedding in. Repeat callers are now identified automatically through the telephone number used but call handlers must still do manual searches of other systems for more information. It is important that the constabulary checks this happens. There is a plan to recruit additional call handlers to build extra resilience through 2019/20, which is positive.

We were pleased to see that the constabulary had acted on our 2017 feedback; call handlers are now given more information to help them identify vulnerability. Our crime file review found that out of 23 vulnerable victims, their vulnerability was identified in 19 cases, either at first contact or during the investigation. While this is a positive step forward, it still means four victims may not have received the service they should have done.

Cheshire Constabulary uses the THRIVE model for its initial assessment of risk. Our crime file review and inspection found inconsistent THRIVE recording standards in the FCC. However, calls were graded appropriately, most response times were appropriate, and victims were not put at risk by a delayed response.

Some switchboard operators didn't engage well with victims. This appeared to have a negative effect on some victims of rape offences. We gave specific feedback on our findings. The constabulary has since completed quality assurance checks and audits. But the recording of THRIVE remains inconsistent.

We found some incidents where there was a delay in responding, and the THRIVE assessments were missing. Yet they were correctly graded and awaiting deployment. Several supervisors told us that some THRIVE assessments could miss linked offences and vulnerability detail.

The recording of the initial assessment of risk must be made more consistent. This will mean the assessment of risk, and vulnerability, is clear from the outset. It will help to

re-assess the situation when deployment is delayed and give the information needed to those who attend and investigate.

It was good to see that staff working in public enquiry offices and those taking reports of incidents from the public had received THRIVE training. However, a minority hadn't received this face-to-face training. The constabulary needs to make sure all enquiry office and call takers receive it.

Our crime file review highlighted inconsistencies in the marking, identification of, and use of vulnerability information in investigations. The constabulary recognises that this hasn't been resolved.

Officers could often explain how to add information using the VPA process, which is positive. But the constabulary needs to review its processes for identification and flagging of vulnerability. There must be a consistent process, which will help when considering safeguarding for victims.

Responding to incidents

Our crime file review showed that of the 45 incidents that required a response, the attendance time taken was appropriate in 40 cases.

The ACC now holds bi-weekly governance meetings to monitor performance. This includes call handling and response times. We found that the constabulary was very aware of its 101 call abandonment rate of 18.1 percent. It is considering resourcing options within the FCC to improve this. This is important, as one third of its emergency deployments come from 101 calls.

The constabulary has good data to understand and track its performance using its new analysis technology. The new control system has information on resourcing levels and incident demand. This helps staff make effective and efficient deployment decisions.

Data provided by the constabulary for between 1 and 27 March 2019 shows its average grade one emergency response time was ten minutes. The average grade two priority response time was 59 minutes. For grade two incidents, the target time was met in only 54 percent of cases. This emphasises how important it is to record the initial assessment of risk and vulnerability, as this allows for more evaluation and prioritisation when there are delays.

In our 2017 inspection, we concluded that processes for scheduling appointments needed reviewing. We were assured that this had been done. We found that appointments for domestic abuse should not be made unless authorised by a control room sergeant. Also, that the IIT should not be allocated domestic abuse incidents. More dip sampling is now carried out to ensure compliance.

The quality of officers' VPAs needed improving. This year, we found that standards have improved. A new video, circulated to officers, raised awareness of the importance of their VPA referrals. This included an emphasis on adverse childhood experiences. Audits identified weaknesses in VPAs and THRIVE is now incorporated into the VPA template to give it more structure.

Feedback will now recognise very good VPAs and highlight where there is room for improvement. VPA rates have increased and domestic abuse incidents should not be closed off until a VPA is submitted.

There is the expectation that [domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) referrals](#) are completed face to face. The officers we spoke to understood this. For cases where victims don't co-operate to help complete DASH, it is important that officers must still use professional judgment and incident history to complete these assessments. Officers understood the importance of their VPAs, and their responsibility in submitting them.

We examined a selection of VPAs and found that they had generally improved. The small minority of detail omissions we saw were about children, and linking them to constabulary systems. There was feedback from the initial reviewing officers (IROs) that the VPAs about missing children could be better and some referral unit supervisors highlighted that there were still some inconsistencies.

The constabulary should now continue this monitoring and continue with these improvements. It should use the wealth of experience the IROs and supervisors have to achieve this, as they see all referrals made and the faults.

There have been improvements since our last inspection in how staff work with people with mental health issues. A new strategy and leadership are in place and there is a mental health training plan. Part of this plan is to provide specific face-to-face training to all responding officers during 2019. This is a significant investment in officers' skills.

When we spoke to staff in the mental health agencies the constabulary works with, they talked positively about officers having a good understanding of the issues.

Some hospitals have a named officer to advise and deal with incidents. It was raised that at hospitals without this support, assaults on staff might not be dealt with as effectively. There is a well-established mental health [street triage](#) service. This involves trained police officers working with mental health nurses to provide an initial response to incidents. Officers told us that the triage service needs to extend its availability and operating hours. There are plans to evaluate this service when the mental health training programme finishes in 2019.

When called to incidents, officers use their judgment to decide whether to arrest suspects of domestic abuse or arrange [voluntary attendance](#) if circumstances allow.

The domestic abuse arrest rate for the constabulary to 30 September 2018 was 30 percent. This is just below the England and Wales average of 32 percent for the same period. The domestic abuse charge/summons rate for the same period was 14.4 percent. This was ahead of the England and Wales average of 12.5 percent.

Our crime file review confirmed that victims of domestic abuse are supported effectively. Prompts within systems make sure that officers take appropriate action when dealing with domestic abuse. An example is when officers pursued a prosecution involving a high-risk victim of domestic abuse, even though the victim didn't support it.

Independent domestic violence advocates visit and support domestic abuse victims. This support was consistently offered and used, even when victims didn't support police investigations, which is good.

Supporting vulnerable victims

Uniformed teams routinely safeguard vulnerable victims. Responding officers take safeguarding actions at scenes, and we saw these actions recorded on VPA referrals. They understand that if they are allocated the crime to investigate, then safeguarding responsibility remains with them. They also help other teams within the constabulary in their safeguarding duties. And there was evidence of safeguarding people at risk of vulnerability through exploitation. Uniformed teams carry out follow-up visits to domestic abuse victims who have been granted protection through the DVPO/Ns. This is a positive approach.

The constabulary consistently uses its legal powers to protect domestic abuse victims with DVPO/Ns and Clare's Law disclosures. And it monitors the use of these powers. For example, a victim of domestic abuse declined to support police action after an assault. The CPS didn't proceed. The offender was issued with a DVPN by the constabulary. When the DVPN was breached, the offender was re-arrested. The victim then supported the police action and the offender was charged with the original assault and breach of the DVPN.

In cases involving domestic abuse, we found an expectation that pre-charge bail would be used. The constabulary carried out audits to check bail use was being used appropriately. This included RUI suspects and suspects charged, and that bail conditions were applied when appropriate.

Cheshire Constabulary has four established integrated front doors (IFDs). This is where police and the agencies they work with – such as social services, health and education – are co-located and share information. This gives each service a better picture of vulnerability.

Teams carry out secondary assessments of the VPA referrals. We visited some of these units and found that the workloads appeared to be well-managed. Levels of supervision and individual support to the IROs, who have a high level of responsibility, were inconsistent. This was due to a vacancy which had an impact on supervision and support.

The constabulary takes part in [multi-agency risk assessment conferences](#) (MARACs). This is where partner organisations who are involved in safeguarding and supporting victims discuss high-risk domestic abuse cases.

The constabulary expects that those involved will refer all high-risk cases to them. Teams also work with the Safe Lives charity, which works to end domestic abuse. This includes trialling in one area a mini MARAC three times a week. All high-risk cases are still referred to MARAC, but this trial should allow quicker interventions.

We assessed evidence that medium-risk cases could be elevated to high-risk based on professional judgment to then get the support of MARAC. But we found in one IFD that some high-risk cases could be filtered out of MARAC attendance. We brought this to the attention of the constabulary who assured us this no longer happens.

The constabulary should satisfy itself that all processes are standardised, and all high-risk cases referred.

In line with our feedback from 2017, the constabulary now surveys victims of domestic abuse who didn't support police action. A newly introduced domestic abuse operational meeting will consider the victim journey and feedback from these surveys should help to improve services. The constabulary also uses the pan-Cheshire safety partnership to share what is done well and lessons learned.

The constabulary has a paedophile crime investigation team (PCIT). It tackles offenders using and sharing indecent images of children. We visited the PCIT and found it to be an effective unit. Specialist internet child protection software is used daily. We found it was up to date, with only one case waiting to be assessed, and enough people were trained to use it to provide resilience.

The force intelligence bureau assesses suspected offenders and a recognised risk assessment process helps prioritise activity. The PCIT had actioned 48 cases in the past six months to March 2019. The officers' workloads were an average of 13 cases. While this was manageable, this is likely to grow. PCIT officers considered that they needed more specialist training. The constabulary needs to consider this, together with the predicted growth. All PCIT cases charged to court have sexual harm prevention order applications made.

At the time of our inspection, the constabulary was managing 1,002 RSOs within the community. The average workload for an offender manager is 67 cases. To manage RSOs, the constabulary uses risk management 2000 and active risk management (ARMS) processes.

Data showed that there were 43 ARMS assessments outstanding, and 33 more were outstanding from the probation service. While most visits to RSOs were up to date, 106 were overdue. This figure wasn't easy to find due to inconsistencies in recording processes, which makes it difficult to get an overview of performance. Of the overdue visits, a minority were high-risk, with 15 outstanding. There was an awareness of this and a plan to address these. There is RSO data available, an improvement plan, and governance of RSO management.

Supervisors expect numbers of RSOs to grow. This, combined with workloads and outstanding visits, suggests the constabulary should review its staffing resilience, procedures and timing of visits. Staff must also understand the process of recording and planning visits in line with guidelines.

We found that more could be done to involve, and generate awareness among, uniformed teams of RSOs. Information is included in briefings, and there is some involvement of uniformed officers when needed. But officers and PCSOs we spoke to wanted better communication with RSO managers. They were keen to have more information for intelligence gathering and awareness.

Tackling serious and organised crime

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Good

This question was not subject to detailed inspection in 2018/19, and our judgment from the 2017 effectiveness inspection has been carried over. No areas for improvement were identified in our 2017 inspection.

Armed policing

We have previously inspected how well forces provide armed policing. This formed part of our 2016 and 2017 effectiveness inspections. Subsequent terrorist attacks in the UK and Europe have meant that the police service maintains a focus on armed capability in England and Wales.

It is not just terrorist attacks that place operational demands on armed officers. The threat can include the activity of organised crime groups or armed street gangs and all other crime involving guns. The *Code of Practice on the Police Use of Firearms and Less Lethal Weapons* makes forces responsible for implementing national standards of armed policing. The code stipulates that a chief officer be designated to oversee these standards. This requires the chief officer to set out the firearms threat in an armed policing strategic threat and risk assessment (APSTRA). The chief officer must also set out clear rationales for the number of armed officers (armed capacity) and the level to which they are trained (armed capability).

Understanding the threat and responding to it

The force has an adequate understanding of the potential harm facing the public. Its APSTRA conforms to the requirements of the code and the College of Policing guidance. The APSTRA is published annually and is accompanied by a register of risks and other observations. The designated chief officer reviews the register frequently to maintain the right levels of armed capability and capacity.

The force had not published its own APSTRA and was reliant on an assessment of threats and risks affecting some forces in the region. Although this remains the case the force plans to rectify this in 2020. We will monitor this development closely.

All armed officers in England and Wales are trained to national standards. There are different standards for each role that armed officers perform. Most armed incidents in Cheshire Constabulary are attended by officers trained to an armed response vehicle standard. However, incidents sometimes occur that require the skills and specialist capabilities of more highly trained officers.

We found Cheshire Constabulary has good arrangements in place to mobilise officers with specialist skills should these be required. On these occasions, agreements are in place for the capabilities to be provided by Merseyside Police.

Working with others

It is important that effective joint working arrangements are in place between neighbouring forces. Armed criminals and terrorists have no respect for county boundaries. As a consequence, armed officers must be prepared to deploy flexibly in the knowledge that they can work seamlessly with officers in other forces. It is also important that any one force can call on support from surrounding forces in times of heightened threat.

Cheshire Constabulary has effective arrangements with North Wales Police to provide armed policing. This means that the standards of training, armed deployments and command of armed operations are assured in both forces.

We also examined how well prepared forces are to respond to threats and risks. Armed officers in Cheshire Constabulary are trained in tactics that take account of the types of recent terrorist attacks. Also Cheshire Constabulary has an important role in designing training exercises with other organisations that simulate these types of attack. We found that these training exercises are reviewed carefully so that learning points are identified, and improvements are made for the future.

In addition to debriefing training exercises, we also found that Cheshire Constabulary reviews the outcome of all firearms incidents that officers attend. This helps ensure that best practice or areas for improvement are identified. We also found that this knowledge is used to improve training and operational procedures.

Efficiency

Force in context

Spend per head of population
2018/19 projection

	Cheshire spend	England and Wales spend
Spend per head of population 2018/19 projection	£174	£192

Spend per head of population by category
2018/19 projection

	Cheshire spend	England and Wales spend
Visible frontline	£70	£65
Non-visible frontline	£51	£62
Frontline Support	£12	£17
Business support	£36	£41
Other	£5	£8

How efficiently does the force operate and how sustainable are its services?

Good

Summary

Cheshire Constabulary is good at meeting current demand.

The constabulary is good at planning for the future. It has done some positive work to understand and predict future demand. The constabulary has a regular police presence within its communities and responds to public feedback. It has plans to introduce 50 more frontline roles.

The constabulary remains committed to local policing. It is making several improvements, such as making it easier for people to access its services online.

It manages its finances well and has made significant savings. Its focus has been on non-pay and protecting workforce numbers. It now needs to develop its longer-term plans.

Meeting current demands and using resources

Good

This question was not subject to detailed inspection in 2018/19, and our judgment from the 2017 efficiency inspection has been carried over. No areas for improvement were identified in our 2017 inspection.

Planning for the future

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Good

Cheshire Constabulary is generally good at planning for the future. This is a change of grade from our 2017 assessment, in which the constabulary was considered outstanding.

There has been a focus more recently on IT improvements to establish working practices. These include mobile working and control room systems. Attention is now turning to the operational side, to improve efficiency.

Recent leadership changes and more sophisticated technology is helping the constabulary deal with growing demand and informing its future plans. It is now in a good position to develop the longer term plans it needs for the future.

The constabulary communicates well with the public. And it will soon launch new online communication tools to make it easier for people to access its services.

Cheshire Constabulary has good financial plans. It has made savings and protected frontline policing. Recruiting externally brings in new skills and experience. The constabulary would now benefit from developing its talent management and training programmes.

The constabulary aims to make further improvements, and continue to work with other agencies, to provide the best service possible.

Areas for improvement

- The constabulary should develop and complete its understanding of likely future demand.
- The constabulary should develop and use an effective talent management programme. This would realise the potential of the workforce, and help develop for the future.
- The constabulary should review its training functions and plans to ensure they maximise the investment opportunities and provide the training needed for the workforce.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of its performance in this area.

Assessing future demand for services

Cheshire Constabulary was assessing future demand for its services, but this wasn't complete when we inspected.

There have been significant senior leadership team changes since our last inspection in 2017. The constabulary is now in a stronger position to develop a better understanding of the future demand for its services, and the resourcing it will need.

It uses occupational capability reviews (OCRs) and priority-based budgeting (PBB) as part of its planning to understand its short to medium-term demand.

During the OCR process, senior leaders and departmental heads consider current and future trends and demands in their business areas when identifying resourcing needs. The findings from the OCR process are used in the PBB process and applied annually to every area of the constabulary. The PBB process produces budget predictions set against variable service levels. It considers the volume changes in demand set over the next two to three years. These processes are well-established and work well.

The constabulary has done some positive work to understand and predict future demand. It is using crime type forecasting and subject matter expert predictions to do this. While not yet complete, progress has been made in better understanding its future demand. However, during inspection, leaders found it easier to discuss demand and workforce requirements for the immediate future than beyond 12 months.

Examples of how the constabulary now better understands demand include:

- the force control centre (FCC) working with external consultants to ensure resourcing levels and shift patterns match demand – changes are made when necessary;
- improving compliance with national crime recording standards – this has resulted in a better understanding of true crime demand;
- analysing the increased recording of rape offences – the demand has doubled in the past three years;
- analysing demand relating to missing persons, causes, find rates, frequent missing persons, and the effectiveness of police processes; and
- developing the 2019 force management statement, which should improve its ability to predict future demand.

The constabulary is using more sophisticated technology to deal with future demand. The new command and control technology within the FCC helps manage the demand resulting from 999 and 101 calls for police services.

Frontline officers and staff have mobile devices so that they can remotely access data and carry out important tasks online. This helps them to work more efficiently while they remain a visible neighbourhood presence. The constabulary replaces and updates these mobile devices but acknowledges that more could be done to understand and realise the benefits from this investment.

Understanding public expectations

The constabulary works with local communities in many ways – for example, annual surveys, prioritising work that addresses neighbourhood concerns, and weekly neighbourhood surgeries in each of the 122 wards in the area. In Runcorn and Widnes, there have been developments with the Redeeming Our Communities charity, which aims to reduce crime.

The constabulary remains committed to local policing. There is a regular local police presence, which is what the public has come to expect. The commitment to neighbourhood policing puts Cheshire Constabulary in a strong position to support communities and act on public feedback.

The recent increases of £24 per band D property for 2019/20 was agreed by the police and crime commissioner (PCC) following public consultation. This came with a pledge that it will fund 50 more members of staff to work in frontline policing.

We were presented with evidence of public consultation, and the constabulary's responses. These include:

- talking to residents to help make decisions about relocating police premises;
- using technology to make it easier for people to contact the constabulary and access its services; and
- holding consultation meetings about local issues, such as hunting, which has influenced policing decisions and activity.

There are plans to make it easier for the public to contact the constabulary and use its services. For example, it plans to join the single online home platform in 2019. People can already use the website to report hate crime, identify local priorities and request to contact an officer for advice.

Social media presence is now an important role of a PCSO, with named police accounts focused on local issues. Some PCSOs address activities such as speeding enforcement, which the PCC supports. As demand forecasting improves, PCSO deployments may need to be considered to better support demand reduction in communities and problem solving.

Prioritising

The priorities in the Police and Crime Plan 2016–21 are for a police service that:

- is connected with communities;
- supports victims and protects vulnerable people;
- prevents crime and anti-social behaviour; and
- is a police service that is fit for the future.

Cheshire Constabulary has performed well during austerity. Since 2010, it has made nearly £60m in savings. It has achieved most of this through non-pay budgets and back-office functions. This is a significant achievement which has resulted in the loss of just 135 officers.

The constabulary has sound management processes to manage future investments and resourcing. Any business case needing funding of more than £50k must be agreed by the PCC and must support the police and crime plan objectives.

In accordance with plans, 122 PCSOs have been allocated to the individual ward areas of Cheshire. The recently agreed increase for 2019/20 included a commitment to fund 43 more police officers and seven PCSOs. They would be dedicated to neighbourhood policing and tackling serious crime. The PCC asked the public if they agreed to the increase to support these areas of policing.

Future workforce

Cheshire Constabulary showed a good understanding of the skills needed to meet its medium-term demand. It should now focus on developing longer term plans.

It has a plan that shows a good understanding of the main staffing factors for the next 12-18 months. The workforce plan covers skills gaps, retirement profiles, diversity, detective capability and skills loss, together with actions to address these issues. Department managers use the OCR process to work with and consult colleagues.

The constabulary has begun to map the workforce's skills and align them with future demand. It recognises the need to review its operating model and other structures to make sure it is fit for the future.

Recruiting more officers in 2019/20 will potentially pose a problem in terms of training resourcing. To prepare for this, the constabulary is developing recruitment and police apprenticeship training. It is also aware of the demands on tutors and detective training.

The constabulary is working with the University of Chester to develop the graduate recruitment scheme. The constabulary recognises that the increased number of people being recruited provides an opportunity to increase diversity. It has recruited more female officers at the higher ranks, including a deputy chief constable, a chief superintendent and superintendents.

The constabulary recognises that its workforce needs to be better equipped to deal with those with mental health issues. It has introduced a training programme for all frontline officers, to improve their awareness and skills.

While taking staff away from their work to take part in training is expensive, it is an essential investment for the future. The corporate training plan was still being developed when we inspected. While the staff we spoke to acknowledged that there was some very good training in place, they confirmed that it could sometimes be inconsistent and unplanned, with some specialist officers simply not bothering with it. This is inefficient.

The current method of training sergeants to then train their staff seemed unpopular. The constabulary would benefit from reviewing its training approach and plans to maximise investment opportunities and provide the skills needed.

All posts are advertised externally. We found evidence of skilled staff being recruited from other forces, including senior detectives and specialist police staff posts such as in fleet and change management. Graduates from the Police Now scheme have been recruited, and all nine remain with the constabulary. The constabulary has supported some secondment opportunities to provide development, but this can be limited by the number of detectives available.

Finance plans

Cheshire Constabulary has sound financial plans.

Following its 2010 consultation about revaluing public sector pensions, the government announced, in 2016 and 2018, reductions in the discount rate it uses to set contribution rates for the unfunded public service pension schemes. These include the police service pension scheme. A lower discount rate will result in higher contribution rates for the employer.

The official notification of a lower rate in September 2018 didn't give PCCs time to include the impact in their financial planning. In December 2018, the Government announced a pension grant for 2019/20 for each PCC. It allocated funding to each force to help the police pay for these higher costs in the next year. PCCs must now plan how they will finance the increased costs, assessing the impact on their officer numbers and their ability to provide effective and efficient services.

Before the funding announcement, Cheshire Constabulary calculated that the pension contributions increase would total £5.5m for 2019/20. The constabulary knew it would have to lose a significant number of officers to make the savings required to fund this, and made plans to reduce the number of officers by 209. The increase in Government grant and pension funding reduces this gap to £0.5m. The recent £24 precept increase will mean the constabulary can meet the £0.5m pension contribution gap and invest in increasing the workforce, rather than reducing the number of staff.

Looking ahead to 2020/21, the constabulary believes that grants will remain the same and is planning around a £12 precept increase.

After 2020/21, the constabulary is assuming there will be a one percent reduction in core grant and is working on several different scenarios. It is also considering future pay awards at various rates and assessing the impact. The constabulary uses a range of methods to test financial assumptions, including bi-monthly Police and Crime Commissioners Treasurers' Society meetings, quarterly meetings with regional heads of finance, and advice from National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) leads.

The constabulary has a good record of making savings, with a focus on identifying savings from non-pay and protecting workforce numbers, specifically frontline policing. With a £24 precept increase, the savings requirement for 2019/20 was reported as £1.3m with these efficiencies identified through PBB. The savings requirement for 2020/21 was £0.955m, with efficiencies still to be identified to meet this.

The PCC maintains a reserves strategy which covers the period 2018/19 to 2020/21. During this period, it maintains a £5.273m general reserve (just above 3 percent of the net budget requirement). The reserves strategy also includes a redundancy reserve of £0.632m – these are funds held in case there are redundancies in the future.

Also included within the strategy is a reserve of £1.136m. This was created at the start of the austerity period to help 'invest to save' initiatives. The constabulary had sold some of its buildings. It has found opportunities that mean some staff can work alongside colleagues from Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS). The proceeds from these sales have mainly been used to support the capital programme.

The constabulary is looking to move to other locations that will mean more staff work in the same locations as other CFRS staff. These plans to sell existing buildings could make several million pounds available. This would reduce the amount of borrowing to fund capital investment.

Leadership and workforce development

The constabulary has a people strategy which covers 2018–21. It shows the direction the constabulary intends to take. Current workforce capabilities can be accessed via an online self-service system for managers. We examined this and saw that skills could be easily seen.

All promotions and vacancies are advertised externally. This helps develop the skills and experience needed for the future. For example, staff who join police ranks from areas including fleet and change management bring different skills. People who have recently transferred to the constabulary, or have been promoted there, are improving the workforce mix in senior ranks.

Cheshire Constabulary has brought in graduate recruits from the Police Now scheme and direct entry officers. We found evidence of potential new leaders being identified, ahead of people leaving – for example, the recently appointed head of public protection and paedophile crime investigation posts. But apart from this, we found limited succession planning. This view was shared by staff we spoke to.

The constabulary has continued to promote at all ranks. Officers are provided with acting rank opportunities. But supervisors told us there could be more support and preparation. The people we spoke to felt that career pathways seemed limited, especially in police staff roles.

The constabulary doesn't have an effective talent management scheme. In our 2017 inspection report, we highlighted that the talent processes could be improved and made more consistent. This year, we found a consistent lack of knowledge among the workforce about the talent management scheme. The constabulary would benefit from developing its talent programme.

Ambition to improve

Cheshire Constabulary can now set a clear direction for the future. Its new chief officer team is already planning changes to improve the service. The chief constable's ambition is for the constabulary to be among the best nationally in dealing with domestic abuse.

The change programme so far has focused on IT. This has resulted in investments and improvements in IT capabilities for the future. While this brings advantages, other operational aspects have remained unchanged for several years. The leadership recognises this and change now needs to focus operationally. There is appreciation

that local policing in eight local policing units across four local authority areas could be done more efficiently.

Superintendents have already been allocated to areas to examine new ways to improve services. The constabulary has a traditional CID/PPD split. Leaders are keen to explore more resilient ways of detective working for the future.

Internal reviews are planned for 2019/20. These reviews will focus on improving service and making more savings. The constabulary has a strong track record of collaborative working. The tri-force NICHE programme – an intelligence-sharing platform and database – with Merseyside and North Wales Police is now live. More NICHE improvements are planned. The joint estates programme with CFRS has made savings and established new ways of mixed team working. For example, the head of police finance is also the head of fire finance. The firearms alliance with North Wales Police brings efficiencies in joint resourcing, training and management. The constabulary is exploring other ways of joint working.

The constabulary aims to bring in specific skills needed to achieve change at the pace and scale required. Financial and IT plans are subject to challenge and scrutiny, with benefits expected as part of the programme.

The constabulary doesn't have project managers. It relies on experts being seconded into the project to provide operational knowledge.

Local policing remains a priority for the chief constable and the PCC. To achieve this, and to retain as many police officer numbers as possible in future, the constabulary has realised savings by reviewing its infrastructure and estate.

Running costs are understood and all contracts are reviewed for affordability and service delivery. The constabulary has invested in solar power, which is now returning a profit. It has also downsized and shares property with CFRS. These changes have contributed to the constabulary saving nearly £60m since 2010, while only losing 135 officers.

Legitimacy

Force in context

**Comparison of Cheshire
workforce ethnicity with local population**

as of 31 March 2019

	Cheshire proportion	Local population proportion
Black, Asian and minority ethnic as % of those with stated ethnicity	1.5%	3.1%
White as % of those with stated ethnicity	98.5%	96.9%
Not Stated as % of total	4.9%	

	Cheshire proportion	England and Wales proportion
Proportion of female officers in post as of 31st March 2019	33%	30%

Proportion of workforce without up-to-date security clearance

as of 1 April 2019

Cheshire
proportion

10%

Stop and search by ethnicity

12 months ending 31 March 2018

Cheshire
disproportionality

Stop and Search likelihood of BAME individuals compared to white individuals

1.7

Stop and Search likelihood of Black or Black British individuals compared to white individuals

7.2

Cheshire
rate

England and Wales
rate

Number of stops and searches per 1,000 population

12 months ending 31 March 2018

2.1

4.7

How legitimately does the force treat the public and its workforce?

Good

Summary

Cheshire Constabulary is good at treating the public fairly.

The constabulary promotes an ethical culture, and the workforce is aware of expected behaviours and values. It now has an ethics committee.

It has learnt from a high-profile case involving one of its officers. Its work has involved reassuring the public and raising the profile among staff of abuse of position and the importance of reporting ethical issues.

The constabulary generally manages corruption risks well, and it is good at assessing intelligence. Threat assessments are good but would benefit from being more localised.

The constabulary is good at treating its workforce fairly.

Treating the public fairly

Good

This question was not subject to detailed inspection in 2018/19, and our judgment from the 2017 legitimacy inspection has been carried over. In 2017, we identified two areas for improvement:

- The constabulary should ensure that it records and monitors its officers' use of force comprehensively and complies with the NPCC recording requirements.

This area of improvement has not been discharged. The constabulary needs to further develop its use of force governance and monitoring processes. We have given specific feedback and will revisit this area for improvement.

- The force should review and develop its [independent advisory group](#) arrangements, including being independently chaired with regular senior officer attendance. This should include guidance to bring governance and consistency for local policing in developing community cohesion groups.

The constabulary has developed its independent advisory group arrangements so this area for improvement has been discharged.

Despite this question not being subject to inspection in 2018/19, we reviewed a representative sample of 99 stop and search records to assess the reasonableness of the recorded grounds. We established that 89 percent of those records contained reasonable grounds. Our assessment is based on the grounds recorded by the searching officer and not the grounds that existed at the time of the search.

In our [2017 legitimacy report](#), we recommended that all forces should:

- monitor and analyse comprehensive stop and search data to understand reasons for disparities;
- act on those; and
- publish the analysis and the action by July 2018.

The constabulary has complied with some of these recommendations. But it doesn't identify the extent to which find rates differ between people from different ethnicities and across different types of searches (including separate identification of find rates for drug possession and supply-type offences). And it isn't clear that it monitors enough data to identify numbers of possession-only drug searches or how these align with local or force-level priorities.

We reviewed the website. This includes reference to a research report commissioned by the constabulary explaining the results of a survey of people who have been stopped and searched. However, the research report has not been published. There was no obvious mention of analysis it had carried out to understand and explain reasons for disparities or any action taken later.

Ethical and lawful workforce behaviour

Good

Cheshire Constabulary has a positive ethical culture, and leaders ensure staff know the force's values.

There is an open and learning culture. The constabulary now needs to highlight the work of its ethics panel to the workforce, so they can use it more.

There is confidence in the system of reporting potential corruption, and the [counter corruption unit](#) (CCU) is well-used.

Cheshire Constabulary complies with vetting procedures when recruiting. But the backlog in vetting renewals and reviews needs to be cleared.

The constabulary manages corruption risks well, and it is good at assessing this intelligence. It had good IT systems to assist this work.

It has developed good links with other agencies who support vulnerable people and encourage concerns to be reported. While the constabulary is good in this area, it could improve further by raising awareness among its workforce of its policies on business interests, gifts and associations. It then needs to monitor this information.

Areas for improvement

- The constabulary should expand the work and effectiveness of its ethics panel to ensure the workforce are aware of it and how to raise issues. Learning outcomes should be shared openly.
- The force should ensure all staff have received at least the lowest level of vetting clearance for their roles and clear any backlogs, ensuring it is fully compliant with the national vetting guidelines.
- The force should monitor its vetting decisions to identify disparities and disproportionality (e.g. black, Asian and minority ethnic [BAME] groups), and act to reduce them where appropriate.
- The force should ensure that its CCU has enough capability and capacity to counter corruption effectively and proactively.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the constabulary's performance in this area.

Maintaining an ethical culture

Cheshire Constabulary has a newly formed strategic plan for 2019/20 in which it clearly sets out its values as being:

- respect;
- integrity and transparency; and
- fairness.

When we inspected, the code of ethics was displayed prominently throughout the constabulary. Policies we examined contained equality impact assessments. As part of its promotion processes, potential leaders are required to demonstrate competence in managing situations involving ethical problems.

The leadership has set out a people promise behavioural framework. This focuses on leading, supporting, developing, and an open and healthy culture.

In the past 12 months, the force leadership has dealt with the challenges of a high-profile court case with one of its officers convicted of a serious sexual offence while on duty. They have worked internally to raise the profile of abuse of authority and encourage ethical reporting, and externally through transparent communications with the public of Cheshire to provide reassurance.

A professor of ethics from Chester University advises the ethics panel. Ethics meetings can be called as issues arise. Staff and the PCC can propose issues to be considered and this is advertised on the intranet. However, we found virtually no knowledge of the ethics panel among the workforce we spoke to. The constabulary should increase the awareness and effectiveness of the ethics panel and its procedures. This will make sure ethical dilemmas are raised and that what has been learnt is passed on to the workforce.

Most staff we spoke to had regular conversations with their supervisors, but it was rare to have ethical issues built into this. We found no monitoring of the annual integrity health check that should be completed between individuals and supervisors. It should work with its professional standards department (PSD) to make improvements. However, we were given some examples where officers have challenged the perceived standards of other officers.

We were pleased that most of the workforce we spoke to considered that the constabulary now has an open learning, rather than a blame, culture. The PSD shares an open learning policy, which is positive. The PSD has completed an area for improvement we identified in 2017. It has improved the information provided to complainants and the recording of complaints.

The constabulary complies with the National Vetting Code of Practice and authorised professional practice (APP) when recruiting. This includes contractors and volunteers. But it doesn't monitor vetting decisions to identify disparities (e.g. BAME groups). As a result, it doesn't act to reduce them where appropriate. This is something it needs to consider.

The constabulary fulfils its requirements to check whether anyone it intends to employ is on either of the barred or advisory lists held by the College of Policing. It complies with APP direction in relation to the barred and advisory lists, both checking incoming personnel and ensuring those dismissed are placed on the appropriate lists.

The constabulary has not achieved our 2016 recommendation that, within two years, all members of the police workforce should have received at least the lowest level of vetting clearance for their roles. Progress since 2016 can only be described as slow.

There are backlogs in the vetting renewals and reviews of current staff as the unit focuses on new recruits. During our inspection, we identified outstanding vetting for 35 officers and 355 police staff. These backlogs highlight the need to review the vetting unit's resilience and effectiveness.

The constabulary has effective channels for clarifying and reinforcing acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. Learning is included in newsletters, intranet updates and weekly orders. This includes learning from national events and incidents.

A communications strategy was launched following a serving police constable being convicted of a serious sexual offence while on duty. Details of misconduct cases are shared so the workforce understands the consequences of not meeting the expected standards of behaviour.

We found that staff regularly used constabulary policy to record gifts and hospitality. Most staff we spoke to understood that these needed to be reported, but not what to do if gifts were declined. The workforce would benefit from the integrity policies being shared and clarified. We discovered some uncertainty about gifts reporting procedures and what exactly was a notifiable association.

Tackling corruption

The constabulary is generally good at managing organisational corruption risks.

We found the strategic counter corruption threat assessment to be fit for purpose, and it had a related control strategy. But the threat assessment could be more localised.

The documents outline the main control strategy areas and related intelligence, enforcement and prevention priorities. But there were no ownership or timescales attributed to the activity that would take place as a result.

The constabulary makes good use of the integrity registers, although it could do more to check compliance with decisions around both business interests and notifiable associations.

It doesn't hold a formal proactive people intelligence meeting. But it does use local management interventions and the CCU conducts ethical interviews.

The constabulary is good at looking for and assessing intelligence about potential corruption. There is a confidential reporting system that is provided through 'Crimestoppers', which is available to staff and the public. Most of the workforce we asked about it considered it to be confidential.

The CCU has launched an awareness campaign which has increased reporting of integrity concerns. There is a well-used facility to report directly into the CCU. In 60 corruption intelligence cases we reviewed, more work could have been carried out in just five.

There are strong links with external groups who support vulnerable victims. CCU staff have given several presentations to social care and social workers. These have been provided at both managerial and practitioner levels. The abuse of position action plan explains the work carried out.

As well as the presentations, a handout outlines triggers for concern and signs to look for. This has been provided to external organisations. The constabulary can evidence several cases where referrals have been generated since these links were developed. This is encouraging.

The constabulary has invested in IT monitoring software. CCU staff are becoming increasingly experienced in using it. It was explained that this system can monitor all systems including hand-held devices and phones. But the CCU lacks the capacity to carry out more proactive work which is something it now needs to consider.

We examined the abuse of position action plan. The document is comprehensive and shows significant activity across all prescribed areas in the NPCC strategy. The constabulary has raised awareness among its workforce on this issue. It has trained supervisors in the signs to look for among staff. While awareness training was

still under way, we were surprised to find many staff who hadn't received any training on this issue. This included some in supervisory detective posts. The constabulary should continue its work to raise the profile of this among its workforce.

Corruption intelligence is held on a dedicated system. This is firewalled and only accessible on computers within the CCU. This was found to be up to date and well maintained by CCU staff. All the cases reviewed requiring referral to the Independent Office for Police Conduct were correctly referred.

Treating the workforce fairly

Good

This question was not subject to detailed inspection in 2018/19, and our judgment from the 2017 legitimacy inspection has been carried over. In 2017, we identified an area for improvement:

- The constabulary should develop a process for recording and monitoring interventions made by its managers that do not result in grievances.

Our pre-inspection activity showed that the constabulary had good grievance procedures. And there was appropriate monitoring of fairness at work issues and availability of trend data. But this did not yet fully extend to management interventions.

Annex A – About the data

Data in this report is from a range of sources, including:

- Home Office;
- Office for National Statistics (ONS);
- our inspection fieldwork; and
- data we collected directly from all 43 police forces in England and Wales.

When we collected data directly from police forces, we took reasonable steps to agree the design of the data collection with forces and with other interested parties such as the Home Office. We gave forces several opportunities to quality assure and validate the data they gave us, to make sure it was accurate. For instance:

- We shared the submitted data with forces, so they could review their own and other forces' data. This allowed them to analyse where data was notably different from other forces or internally inconsistent.
- We asked all forces to check the final data used in the report and correct any errors.

We set out the source of this report's data below.

Methodology

Data in the report

British Transport Police was outside the scope of inspection. Any aggregated totals for England and Wales exclude British Transport Police data, so will differ from those published by the Home Office.

When other forces were unable to supply data, we mention this under the relevant sections below.

Most similar groups

We compare each force's crime rate with the average rate for forces in its most similar group (MSG). MSGs are groups of similar police forces, based on analysis of demographic, social and economic factors which relate to crime. We could not identify any forces similar to City of London Police. Every other force has its own group of up to seven other forces which it is most similar to.

An MSG's crime rate is the sum of the recorded crimes in all the group's forces divided by its total population. All of the most similar forces (including the force being compared) are included in calculating the MSG average.

Population

For all uses of population as a denominator in our calculations, unless otherwise noted, we use ONS mid-2018 population estimates.

Survey of police workforce

We surveyed the police workforce across England and Wales, to understand their views on workloads, redeployment and how suitable their assigned tasks were. This survey was a non-statistical, voluntary sample so the results may not be representative of the workforce population. The number of responses per force varied between 0 and 920. So we treated results with caution and didn't use them to assess individual force performance. Instead, we identified themes that we could explore further during fieldwork.

BMG survey of public attitudes towards policing (2018)

We commissioned BMG to survey public attitudes towards policing in 2018. Ipsos MORI conducted a similar version of the survey in 2015–2017.

The survey consisted of about 400 respondents for each of the 43 forces. Most surveys were completed online, by members of online research panels. However, a minority of the surveys (around 750) were conducted face-to-face. These face-to-face surveys were specifically targeted to groups that are traditionally under-represented on online panels. This aimed to make sure the survey respondents were as representative as possible of the total adult population of England and Wales. A small number of respondents were also surveyed online via postal invites to the survey.

Results were weighted by age, gender, ethnicity and indices of multiple deprivation to match population profiles. The sampling method used is not a statistical random sample and the sample size was small, which may be more problematic for larger force areas compared to small ones. So any results provided are only an indication of satisfaction rather than an absolute.

Review of crime files

We reviewed police case files for these crime types:
- theft from person;
- rape (including attempts);
- stalking;
- harassment;
- common assault;
- grievous bodily harm (wounding); and
- actual bodily harm.

Our file review was designed to provide a broad overview of how well the police:

- identify vulnerability;
- conduct investigations; and
- treat victims.

We randomly selected files from crimes recorded between 1 May and 31 July 2018 and assessed them against several criteria. We reviewed 60 case files in each force, except for the Metropolitan Police Service where we reviewed 90.

For our file review, we only selected a small sample size of cases per force. So we didn't use results from as the only basis for assessing individual force performance, but alongside other evidence.

Force in context

999 calls

We collected this data directly from all 43 police forces in England and Wales.

Recorded crime and crime outcomes

We took this data from the July 2019 release of the Home Office police recorded crime and outcomes data tables.

Total police-recorded crime includes all crime (except fraud) recorded by all forces in England and Wales (except BTP). Home Office publications on the overall volumes and rates of recorded crime and outcomes include British Transport Police, which is outside the scope of this HMICFRS inspection. Therefore, England and Wales rates in this report will differ from those published by the Home Office.

Police-recorded crime data should be treated with care. Recent increases may be due to forces' renewed focus on accurate crime recording since our 2014 national crime data inspection.

Other notable points to consider when interpreting outcomes data are listed below.

- Crime outcome proportions show the percentage of crimes recorded in the 12 months ending 30 September 2018 that have been assigned each outcome. This means that each crime is tracked or linked to its outcome. So this data is subject to change, as more crimes are assigned outcomes over time.

- Under the new framework, 37 police forces in England and Wales provide outcomes data through the HODH every month. All other forces provide this data via a monthly manual return.

- Leicestershire, Staffordshire and West Yorkshire forces participated in the Ministry of Justice's out of court disposals pilot. As part of the pilot, they stopped issuing simple cautions or cannabis/khat warnings and restricted their use of penalty notices for disorder for adult offenders. These three forces continued to follow these procedures since the pilot ended in November 2015. Later, other forces also limited their use of some out of court disposals. So the outcomes data should be viewed with this in mind.

For a full commentary and explanation of outcome types please see the Home Office statistics, Crime outcomes in England and Wales: year ending March 2019.

Domestic abuse outcomes

In England and Wales, 29 police forces provide domestic abuse outcomes data through the Home Office data hub (HODH) every month. We collected this data directly from the remaining 14 forces.

Domestic abuse outcome proportions show the percentage of crimes recorded in the 12 months ending 31 March 2018 that have been assigned each outcome. This means that each crime is tracked or linked to its outcome. So this data is subject to change, as more crimes are assigned outcomes over time.

Workforce figures (including ethnicity and gender)

This data was obtained from the Home Office annual data return 502. The data is available from the Home Office's published police workforce England and Wales statistics or the police workforce open data tables. The Home Office may have updated these figures since we obtained them for this report.

The data gives the full-time equivalent workforce figures as at 31 March. The figures include section 38-designated investigation, detention or escort officers, but not section 39-designated detention or escort staff. They include officers on career breaks and other types of long-term absence but exclude those seconded to other forces.

Spend per head of population

We took this data from the HMICFRS value for money profiles.

These profiles are based on data collected by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, through the Police Objective Analysis. The spend over time figures are adjusted for inflation. The population figures are ONS mid-year estimates, with the 2018/19 value calculated by assessing the trend for the last five years. More details on this data can be found on our website.

Stop and search

We took this data from the Home Office publication, Police powers and procedures, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2018. Stop and search totals exclude vehicle only searches and searches where the subject's ethnicity was not stated.

Vetting data (workforce without up-to-date security clearance)

We collected this data directly from all 43 police forces in England and Wales.